

Southeast Fisheries Science Center
Miami Laboratory
75 Virginia Beach Drive
Miami, FL 33149

January 29, 2007

TO : Guy Davenport,
Chief (acting), Sustainable Fisheries Division

FROM : Larry Beerkircher,
Pelagic Observer Program

SUBJECT: Fourth quarter (2006) observer coverage summary.

The Pelagic Observer Program (POP) achieved a 10.6% coverage rate for the fourth quarter period of 2006 (October 1 to December 31). Selection letters were sent by certified mail service (return receipt) on September 15, 2006 to 24 vessel permit holders (owners and/or operators) for notification of observer coverage. The POP had the responsibility of the regular coverage requirement in the Northwest Atlantic, including the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea. During this quarter the POP was not involved in any cooperative research projects.

Of special note, there were three (3) vessels (Seneca, Capt. Mike, and Capt Bob) selected for coverage for Quarter 3 which had fishing effort in both Quarter 3 and Quarter 4. Also, one (1) vessel (Night Star II) that was selected for Quarter 1 2007 departed previous to January 1, 2007, however no effort was observed in Quarter 4. For the purposes of this quarterly report, vessel set effort on or after September 30, and the sets and associated hauls occurring on or before December 31, along with any incidental takes observed during this quarter period (number of sets observed, days at-sea, animals caught) will be included in this summary. Overall during this quarter, observers spent 220 days at sea on 17 fishing vessels, which resulted in 134 hauls observed and a coverage rate of 10.6%. During the 17 observed trips (Table 1), set effort occurred in the geographical areas of the Gulf of Mexico (GOM), the Mid-Atlantic Bight (MAB), the Northeast Coastal (NEC), and the Northeast Distant (NED).

Of the pelagic longline trips covered by observers under the 8% fleet requirement, a total of 109,585 hooks were fished. The total catch observed consisted of 5,991 fish representing 44 species of fish. The catch data was comprised of 1,346 swordfish, 294 bigeye tuna, 1,011 yellowfin tuna, 65 bluefin tuna, 198 albacore tuna, 430 other tuna species, 45 dolphin fish (mahi), 24 wahoo, 55 billfish species, 332 other finfish (escolar, lancetfish,

etc.), 314 skates/rays, 0 small coastal sharks, 401 large coastal sharks, 1,773 pelagic sharks, and 17 unidentified fish species. During the quarter, observers also recorded incidental takes of protected species (Table 2) which included 10 marine mammals (6-pilot whales-alive; 1 Pilot whale-dead; 1-marine mammal-dead; 1-dolphin-alive; 1-dolphin-condition unknown) and 3 seabirds (1-shearwater-alive; 2-greater shearwater-dead), in addition to 24 sea turtles (13-leatherbacks-alive; 1-leatherback-dead; 10-loggerheads-alive).

Although occasional communications by telephone and faxes do occur from owners of selected vessels prior to and during the quarter, in general, my staff and I continue to have to place calls to most of the vessel owners to determine fishing activities and port location of the vessels. My recommendation is for the SEFSC to suggest to the HMS-HQ office to send periodic notices via fax distribution as reminders to vessel permit holders of their responsible for contacting the POP office of their fishing activity when selected. Until this action is supported, much of the staff time will always be committed to calling marinas, fish dealers, and/or leaving messages on phone recorders in hopes of locating the vessels.

During the quarter, the POP did not place observers on 11 of the 24 vessels selected (46 %; Table 3), thus reducing the target coverage of the POP office by 70 sets. Unfortunately, there were 2 vessels (representing a total of 6 sets) in which the owners reported their vessels as not fishing (damaged or tied to the dock), sold, or involved in another fishery. There were seven selected vessels listed in Table 3 as not participating due to non-communication with the office, lack of a current safety decal, lack of bunk/life raft capacity, or a combination of those. These vessels reduced the POP's coverage opportunities by a minimum of 47 sets, which, if observed, would have resulted in our attaining an overall fourteen percent (14%) coverage. Lack of communication with our office and lack of marine safety decals still affects our program the most in any quarterly coverage. In addition, observer accommodations or liferaft can have an impact. With these excuses from owners re-occurring each quarter and with many of the same vessels on a regular basis, my staff continues to emphasize that the Agency should seek other alternatives of collecting data from these vessels if regular participation in observer coverage cannot be enforced for the permit holder. Fortunately this quarter, many of the vessels that were covered provided more sets than were requested in the selection letters.

In closing, neither the Turtle Take Estimates (TTE) nor the Net Mortality Ratio (NMR) mentioned in the 2004 Biological Opinion (BO) are provided in this report as the POP does not have the staffing expertise to conduct these analyses. In addition, the POP recorded no sawfish catches during the quarter; this species is not likely to occur in the pelagic environment. Although turtle

handling workshops are being scheduled at various ports, observers have also been instructed to share their expertise of using the turtle handling gear. Additionally, on August 5, 2004, the NOAA-Fisheries implemented the regulations for vessels to have the turtle handling and release gear on board. Shortly after that date, the POP observers were provided a turtle gear checklist form issued by the Miami PR and given instructions to review the gear on each boat, fill out the checklist forms, and submit the forms with their data at the completion of the trip. In keeping with the BO reporting requirements from the POP office, observers filled out the turtle handling and release gear forms on all of the fourth quarter covered vessels. Of the vessels selected and observed vessels in quarter 4, 94% of the vessels had the equipment needed for removing gear from turtles in the water (at least 3 of 4 items aboard), and 100% had most of the equipment for removing gear if the turtle is boated (6 or more items aboard). Additionally, 63% of the selected vessels also had the turtle tether aboard, which is voluntary at this time. A PDF document of the observer turtle gear forms will be posted on a secure site of the POP website. Finally, the cumulative number of unique vessels observed since the effective date of the sea turtle conservation regulations (July, 2004), now stands at 81 vessels covered (Table 4).

Attachments:
Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

cc: The POP office files; Gregg Houghaboom, NOAA-Fisheries
SERO/OLE liaison.

Table 1: Regular coverage (8%) of the longline fleet. Number of vessels observed, areas of fishing activity, total hauls observed, and total days at-sea conducted by the SEFSC Miami Laboratory **POP** from October 1 to December 31, 2006.

Vessel Code	Vessel Name	Trip Number	Area	Total Sets	Total Sea Days
532569	SENECA ¹	D04036	NED	13	16
586413	HATUNA MATATA	X03001	GOM	10	15
593587	MISS MELISSA	W02001	MAB	12	18
606059	DEESIE	J02055	NED	12	28
610006	CAPTAIN MICHAEL	Q02062	GOM	11	17
618782	WATERSPORT	W02003	MAB	1	2
643282	OUTLAW	T02026	GOM	1	3
682221	SEA HAWK	T02025	MAB	8	36
			NEC	1	
			NED	8	
904300	KIM NHI	P01124	GOM	8	15
905679	CAPT MIKE ¹	Q02061	GOM	10	11
911431	CAPT DAVID	P01123	GOM	7	10
919844	FORTUNA II	W02002	MAB	2	3
929437	ST PAUL PETER	J02056	GOM	7	12
929813	CAPT BOB ¹	B03001	MAB	5	5
938537	LEROY TENNISHOE	B03002	GOM	9	16
956008	DAKOTA	S01083	MAB	2	12
			NEC	7	
902659	NIGHT STAR II ²	P01125	GOM	0	1
TOTAL		16		134	220

¹Quarter 3 vessel

²Quarter 1 2007 vessel

Table 2: Percent coverage (by sets), the incidental take of Protected Resource species (turtles, mammals, seabirds), and hook effort summarized by geographical area for October 1 to December 31, 2006 (A=Alive, D=Dead, U= Unknown, LB=Leatherback, LH=Loggerhead, O=other)

AREA	TOTAL SETS OBSERVED	REQUIRED 8% COVERAGE	TURTLES		MAMMALS			BIRDS	
			A	D	A	D	U	A	D
			LB/LH/O						
GOM-2	63(12%)	42	2/ 0/0	1	0	0	0	0	0
FEC-3	0(0%)	4	0/ 0/0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SAB-4	0(0%)	6	0/ 0/0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MAB-5	30(7%)	33	2/ 1/0	0	7	2	1	0	1
NEC-6	8(10+%)	6	1/0/0	0	0	0	0	1	0
NED-7	33(85%)	3	8/9/0	0	0	0	0	0	1
OTH	0(0%)	7	0/ 0/0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	-----	-----	--	---	---	---	---	---	---
TOTAL	134(10+%)	101	13/10/0	1	7	2	1	1	2

Hook effort Summary:

<u>Area</u>	<u>Hook effort</u>
GOM	49,274
MAB	25,447
NEC	7,440
NED	27,424
TOTAL	109,585

Table 3: Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 4, 2006 (October 1 to December 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: **(1)**No bunk available;**(2)**Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity;**(3)** Lack of current CFVSE decal; **(4)**No communication with observer office/staff; **(5)**Not fishing (involved in another fishery);**(6)**Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and **(7)**other.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
AMY RENEE	MD4108BV	Reason 4 and 5. Certified letter received. Owner did not communicate with the POP office during quarter of selection. POP requested 1 set for the quarter. Logbook submissions: No fishing reports submitted for October and November.
ADAM C	297535	Reason 3 and 4. Certified letter received. Captain called POP early in October to arrange trip and was told an observer could not be deployed until safety decal was obtained. No further communications were received after that. POP requested 8 sets for the quarter. Logbook submission: Vessel logbooks reported landings in October, but no information has been reported yet for November and December.
BLUEFIN	597797	Reason 5. Certified letter received. Owner called and indicated this vessel was tied up and not fishing. POP requested 5 sets for the quarter. Logbook submissions: No fishing reports received for November and December.

Table 3: Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 4, 2006 (October 1 to December 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: **(1)**No bunk available;**(2)**Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity;**(3)** Lack of current CFVSE decal; **(4)**No communication with observer office/staff; **(5)**Not fishing (involved in another fishery);**(6)**Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and **(7)**other.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
CANDACE	673556	Reason 3. Certified letter received. Owner indicated that vessel did not have a current safety decal, but since the vessel was fishing in Trinidad, no USCG MSO personnel were available to inspect vessel. Owner claims he will have vessel inspected next time it returns to the U.S., but is not sure when that will be. POP requested 4 sets for the quarter. Vessel landings reported in November and December.
DELPHINUS	671174	Reason 1 and 2. Certified letter received. Owner faxed the POP office to indicate that his vessel rejects observer coverage based on 4 crew/4 bunks/4 man life raft. There were no further communications from the vessel. POP requested an OLE boarding, this boarding suggested a total crew size of 3 (not 4). Case has been forwarded to NE OLE for investigation. POP requested 3 sets for the quarter. Landings reported on 10/18, 11/01, and 11/15.

Table 3: Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 4, 2006 (October 1 to December 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: **(1)**No bunk available;**(2)**Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity;**(3)** Lack of current CFVSE decal; **(4)**No communication with observer office/staff; **(5)**Not fishing (involved in another fishery);**(6)**Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and **(7)**other.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
EAGLE EYE II	1022773	Reason 7. Certified selection letter received. Owner had another vessel also selected during this quarter, on which coverage was achieved. POP deployed an observer to the EEII directly after Christmas, but vessel did not leave port until after quarter had ended. POP requested 13 sets for quarter. Logbook submissions: Landings reported for October.
KELLY ANN	633432	Reason 3 and 4. Certified letter received by owner. No communications received from vessel. POP requested 4 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: submitted landings 10/10, 10/22, 11/4.
MISS LENA	918933	Reasons 3. Certified letter received by owner. Owner was notified by POP observer that a safety decal needed to be current. No further communication. POP requested 7 sets for quarter. Vessel submitted landings for 10/28, 11/24.

Table 3: Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 4, 2006 (October 1 to December 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: **(1)**No bunk available; **(2)**Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity; **(3)** Lack of current CFVSE decal; **(4)**No communication with observer office/staff; **(5)**Not fishing (involved in another fishery); **(6)**Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and **(7)**other.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
REBOUND	697038	Reason 7. Certified letter received by owner. Vessel owner reported vessel was making very quick turnarounds, but if an observer was available in port, would have no problem taking observer. Vessel called during each turnaround. No POP observer was available to be stationed in the vessel's port until mid-December, and then a stretch of bad weather kept vessel in port until Christmas. Pop requested 4 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: Owner submitted logbook forms for October, November, and December.
SARAH BETH	608322	Reason 4. Certified letter received by owner. Pop requested 3 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: Owner submitted logbook forms for October and November.
WHITEWATER II	902748	Reason 1. Certified letter received. Owner indicated vessel was taking an extra crew member and no bunk was available for the observer. POP requested 4 sets for quarter. Vessel is on selection list for fourth quarter 2006. Landing information: landings 10/14, 11/12, and 12/17.

Table 3: Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 4, 2006 (October 1 to December 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: **(1)**No bunk available;**(2)**Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity;**(3)** Lack of current CFVSE decal; **(4)**No communication with observer office/staff; **(5)**Not fishing (involved in another fishery);**(6)**Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and **(7)**other.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
WHITEWATER	1026595	Reasons 4. Certified letter received. Communications with Captain did occur in Quarter 3, but no observer was available for vessel departure. Further communications were made with the POP but Captain indicated he wasn't sure vessel would fish again in Quarter 4 due to vacation and engine work. However, vessel departed after Christmas for a fishing trip with no notification to POP. POP requested 17 sets for quarter. Landings information: landings 10/14, 11/14, 1/4/2007.

Table 4: The POP coverage completed aboard the pelagic longline fleet by quarter and year since the publication of the 2004 Biological Opinion. The number of trips observed include vessels that are covered multiple times during a quarter. The number of unique vessels observed represents those vessels only covered once by an observer during a quarter and year.

Quarter	Year	No. of Vessels Selected	No. of Trips Observed	No. of Unique Vessels Observed
3	2004	44	29	29
4	2004	30	28	14
1	2005	34	26	12
2	2005	45	22	9
3	2005	41	19	7
4	2005	28	14	1
1	2006	31	20	4
2	2006	33	23	2
3	2006	39	22	2
4	2006	24	17	1
Cumulative Totals			220	81
